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Mary Murphy

Mary Murphy '78

Illinois Wesleyan University

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Oral History Interview with Mary Murphy
July 24, 2013

Abby Szunyogh: Hello, this is Abby Szunyogh, and today is August—not August—today is July 24th, 2013, and I'm currently at the home of Dr. Mary Murphy in Strongsville, Ohio. Is it alright with you if I take a picture of you today?

Mary Murphy: Okay.

Szunyogh: Okay. And then if you could please state your name and your affiliation with IWU, including your year and your major.

Murphy: Okay. Mary Murphy, I was a biology major at Illinois Wesleyan from 1974 to 1978.

Szunyogh: Okay. So what qualities drew you to Illinois Wesleyan? [Pause] What qualities drew you to Illinois Wesleyan?

Murphy: Oh. I basically went to one of those where-to-go-to-college books and picked—I wanted a school that was Illinois—not too far from home, from Pontiac, Illinois, and, one that was strong in biology, and had a good reputation as far as pre-med, and I picked Illinois Wesleyan and that was the only place I interviewed at, and went for my interview, and they offered me a position and I took it.

Szunyogh: Alright. So you said you were a biology major. What professors within your major stick out in your mind and why?

Murphy: Probably most Dr. Criley. And Dr. Hippensteele. So, Dr. Criley had kind of a personality.

Szunyogh: How so?

Murphy: Sort of spoke his mind, kind of knew where you stood with him. He wasn't outrageous, but funny in his own way. I wish I could remember some specific things that he said, but, I don't.

Szunyogh: That's alright.

Murphy: Okay. And then Dr. Hippensteele, he was kind of, I don't want to say the cool professor, but he did have us come to his house and taught us how to drink coffee without cream and sugar, and, I thought he was a pretty good lecturer. And then there was Dr. Franzen, who gave me my first B in my college career and I understand she told other students she was quite proud of that.

Szunyogh: What courses did those three professors teach?

Murphy: Dr. Hippensteele, took physiology, and Dr. Criley, embryology, Dr. Franzen comparative anatomy, and the general biology course, they lectured on a rotating basis.

Szunyogh: So how close were student faculty interactions at IWU? You said that Dr. Hippensteele had you over to his house sometimes. Was that common amongst professors or was it mostly just his—?

Murphy: I don't know. I mean, we went there. There were a group of us that sort of hung out together and went there. I was a teaching assistant, so I spent a lot of time with the faculty, discussing the general biology students that followed me. So my sophomore, junior, and senior year, I was responsible

for proctoring the weekly quiz and then grading the exams. So I had to spend a lot of time talking to them to explain their questions and see how I should grade certain questions on the tests.

And, I don't know, we just sort of sat around. Sometimes we—I don't remember getting together on campus that much, I just sort of hung out in the faculty—near where the faculty was, and just sort of on a day to day basis we'd have conversations with him, and then January short term of my...junior, yeah my junior year, I spent Marine Biology in Florida, so we got to know Dr. Mr. and Dr. Mrs. Criley a little bit better, as well as their two kids, much to the dismay of Mr. and Mrs. Dr. Criley, the one time that we babysat they said that we expanded their vocabulary and not in a good way, so. But, that was a good time.

Szunyogh: Was that the only January short term you took?

Murphy: Oh no, it wasn't really optional.

Szunyogh: Oh okay.

Murphy: So I'm trying to remember what I took. I took that one year, I took Spanish one January short term and a May term, like two weeks into the summer semester, I stayed and I took Spanish so that I got four semesters of Spanish. And I can't remember the other one I did. I may have done an independent biology study and I was supposed to be studying embryology. There must have been something else but I can't remember what it was.

Szunyogh: So did they have May terms and January terms when you were there?

Murphy: They had something where two weeks at the end of the school year, so, it was after graduation, you get to stay and take a class, and it was a little more intensive than the January short term.

Szunyogh: Okay.

Murphy: Which was four weeks but this was only two weeks, but it was basically, depending on what you took, about eight hours a day. So I took Spanish. The French students, I remember they took French. They stayed at one of the residence halls, and they were supposed to speak French 24/7.

Szunyogh: Oh! That's interesting. So what are some traditions that have changed since your time at Illinois Wesleyan? And which in particular are you sad to see go and what are some customs you are glad are in the past?

Murphy: I really don't know what they're doing much. Seems like every time I go there there's a street missing. So that's changed. So just sort of the way the place is set up. Well they don't have the January Short Term anymore. Now they have a May. And it seems like it's more optional. I think for us everybody took the January term.

And it's good and bad. I mean the May I think gives you more opportunity for travel. Not many students traveled much when I was—not too many—I don't remember-I don't remember any of my friends going to Europe. I mean Florida was considered travel but now I understand that it shifted from the Florida Marine Biology to Australia. So that would've been a little more exciting. I don't know, I remember we had a radio station, I guess they still have a radio station.

Szunyogh: Mhm, WESN.

Murphy: Yeah I remember something my freshman year in the quad where they cut out silhouettes of women and they—I think it was TKE or FIJI or somebody, and they tried to find a woman who'd fit into this silhouette.

Szunyogh: Oh.

Murphy: It was a bustier silhouette. I-I doubt that they're doing that anymore.

Szunyogh: No, not that I've seen.

Murphy: We had a humanities course, I don't know if they still have the humanities course—?

Szunyogh: No.

Murphy: —which I thought was good because it combined—you'd have a literature lecture, sociology lecture, arts, music, so it combined. It was sort of a broad humanities course. I thought that was good.

Szunyogh: Mhm. What year did you take that? Was it—?

Murphy: Sophomore or junior year.

Szunyogh: Oh okay. What kinds of extracurricular activities did you engage in during your time at Illinois Wesleyan?

Murphy: The first year I was there, I was in chapel choir. I wanted to do some other choir, but I couldn't because it conflicted with the—I don't remember what it was—Wednesday afternoon Gen Bio quiz? Something like that. That was a choir you had to audition for, and I had gone to Illinois—I think it was—yeah, it was Illinois Wesleyan's music camp my senior year. The summer between my junior my senior year was held out at Lake Bloomington?

Szunyogh: Was this your junior-senior year of high school?

Murphy: Yes, of high school, and my voice teacher—I got to have voice lessons with Dr. Nott—which was quite an experience.

Szunyogh: Was Dr. Nott still there when you went to—?

Murphy: Mhm! Yup. And his son Will.

Szunyogh: Oh! Will Nott.

Murphy: And then his older son who was in my class. Who I think married Dawn Upshaw, who I vaguely remember but not very well. But he gave me the impression that I might qualify for this one choir that you had to audition for but I didn't get to because I had a prior conflict. So I was involved a little bit in music, and then one year I was involved with the yearbook. Unfortunately it was the year where all the pictures disappeared.

Szunyogh: Oh no! How did that happen?

Murphy: And so we spent—I have no idea! But we worked with the yearbook editor, and when we went to put the yearbook together, there were group photos but there were none of the—what do you call it, impromptu photos?

Szunyogh: Oh. Like candid shots?

Murphy: Yeah, so the candid shots. So I remember going around campus, faking candid shots.

Szunyogh: That's funny.

Murphy: It wasn't the best yearbook.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Murphy: And one year, I guess my senior year I think it was, I was on the Homecoming committee, and... okay, I was on the Homecoming committee.

Szunyogh: We're going to take a pause for just a second.

Szunyogh: Okay sorry about that, we just took a quick pause.

Murphy: Okay so one year I was on the Homecoming committee. And that was the year we decided that we weren't going to have a Homecoming dance, instead we had a Homecoming concert. So we had a standup comedian...whose name fails me right now? He was supposed to join us for an after-Homecoming party but he went back to New York instead so that was disappointing. But I got to drive the convertible with the parade person of honor, Dr. Franzen.

Szunyogh: Oh! That's nice.

Murphy: And then I was in a bunch of honors organizations which really didn't do much. And then I was in the tri—what'd they call it—tri-Beta? Or Beta— I don't know, it was a biology—

Szunyogh: Yeah. I think it's tri-Beta.

Murphy: —it was a biology honors—and we planned a couple of trips, which, unfortunately nobody seemed that interested in, so, the three or four of us that planned the trips were the ones that went—we went to Wisconsin, and one of my classmates was presenting a paper at some college science convention, and we went to Brookfield Zoo in the middle of winter, I remember that. So, and we did something else, some other picnic out to someplace.

Szunyogh: Hm. So what—you mentioned you were on Homecoming committee—what were some other things that went on during Homecoming? What was Homecoming like while you were there?

Murphy: Well there was the game, there was the parade, and there was the game, and then there was an entertainment thing at night, and I really wasn't aware of the alumni meetings and things like that, or the dinners or anything.

Szunyogh: So have you participated in any Homecomings as an alumnus or not really?

Murphy: I think I've been back twice. I think for Homecoming—I don't remember which years I was back twice and then. What I really liked is they had a special event when the Dr. Criley's retired. So I went back for that.

Szunyogh: What was that like?

Murphy: Oh it was good. They had people from different years. And we had a luncheon and then a couple of people who were alums also presented research. So there was somebody that now is kind of the flu guy of the CDC. And he presented a speech, and then a couple other people. Even somebody from Pontiac, Illinois!

Szunyogh: Oh! So, speaking of Pontiac, how well were you able to keep in touch with your family and—

Murphy: While I went to school?

Szunyogh: Yes.

Murphy: That was pretty easy. I mean they were far enough away that I couldn't go home every weekend. And I wasn't at risk of them showing up unexpected. But close enough that I could make arrangements and get home. I didn't have a car, so, [I would] have to have somebody take me there, but that wasn't that hard.

Szunyogh: Did your time at Illinois Wesleyan impact your family at all? Or not particularly, since you weren't very far.

Murphy: Probably not that much. Unfortunately I had enough in scholarship money that it didn't cost that much more than it cost my brother and sister.

Szunyogh: Oh okay.

Murphy: That could've impacted the—

Szunyogh: Yes. So what kind of background did you come from?

Murphy: I was the oldest child, grew up in a small farming community. My father was a construction worker and my mom was a homemaker. And I was probably one of the second or third people in the family that ever went to college.

Szunyogh: Mhm. Did your parents go to college?

Murphy: No. I had an aunt who went to college who didn't finish, another aunt who went to nursing school. Supposedly there was a great uncle who studied law at Notre Dame and then never practiced law, went home and farmed. And a first cousin who went to school at Southern Cal with the intention of playing football but he went the same year and played the same position as OJ Simpson so he never got to go out on the field.

Szunyogh: Well. Oh well. So, what was that like, being one of the first people in your family to go to college?

Murphy: Well it was like nobody knew what it was really like. Could tell me what to expect, or to help me pick out a school. Or to help me pick out a major. Or, yeah, so. It was kind of different. I mean, I didn't really know what to expect.

Szunyogh: Mhm. So how did that affect your experience? Was it easier because you didn't know what to expect or was it more difficult?

Murphy: Yes.

Szunyogh: Both!

Murphy: Both.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Murphy: Some of it was easier because I didn't know what to expect. I think the transition was a little bit harder, knowing how to do things—

Szunyogh: Like what kinds of things?

Murphy: Well, to be honest, if I had parents who had gone to college I would've interviewed at a bunch of colleges. Because that's what, you know, what you're supposed to do. I would've known more about how to get financial aid and things like that, I just – sort of – they said, here, you want this money? I said, okay. I really didn't know what to expect in that in that aspect. And then finishing college and going to medical school, again—well there I had a lot more help because there were people at the college who could help me out. But, yeah. I mean I got a lot of help there because I didn't know what subjects to take.

Szunyogh: Did you come in knowing that you wanted to major in biology?

Murphy: Yeah. I was one of the 120 bio majors my freshman year. And one of the ten that finished as a bio major.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Murphy: About ten I think it was. Well, ten—no it was less than ten that applied to medical school.

Szunyogh: Wow. Were there many other women in your program?

Murphy: Yeah but we were still in the minority. Yeah, let's see. In my class, Cynthia and Jeanette...I think Cynthia ended up going to Champaign. I think she was going to med school, she ended up not. I was the only woman who ended up applying to medical school for my class. Yeah so, you do hang out with the boys a lot. I'm trying to think who else. I can think of people younger and older than I who were in the biology department. And I know there were a couple other people, but not many. Not many.

Szunyogh: Do you think that your experience was different at all because you were a woman or do you think it was fairly equal?

Murphy: Oh that's a hard question. I never really felt discriminated against at Wesleyan but maybe I wasn't looking for it. But yeah there are plenty of things said about how I shouldn't be going to medical

school, that I shouldn't be taking the place of a man, going to medical school. Or that I wasn't strong enough, I couldn't last enough, I'd just go out and have kids and quit. You got some of that. You'd hear—none of my friends would say that, but friends of friends you'd hear stories, only dikes go to medical school. So, yeah, it was there, but I guess I probably just ignored it. My friends were supportive, so I didn't worry about it.

Szunyogh: That's good.

Murphy: But I was also one of the top students. I mean, I had a four point, and I was a National Merit Scholar going into college, so.

Szunyogh: You knew your stuff.

Murphy: I knew my stuff.

Szunyogh: You could handle it.

Murphy: I knew my stuff. I didn't do that well on my MCATs, but I knew my stuff.

Murphy: Mhm.

Szunyogh: [laughs] Well, you got into medical school! So you're a pediatrician now, correct?

Szunyogh: So what was the class selection process, and what sort of classes were you drawn to outside of your major? Was there a class that everyone wanted to take?

Murphy: I don't remember that. I know my freshman year, I got out of taking the introductory English class, and instead I signed for a junior level, like a 300-level English class instead, because the title sounded interesting.

Szunyogh: What was the title?

Murphy: Ah, I can't remember. It was some type of modern lit. And I'm blanking on the professor now but, my first week of the class, I—to get into the class, to get out of the general introductory composition—I think that's what they called it—we had to write an essay. So I write an essay and I turned it in. And I did well enough on it that I didn't have to take the introductory class. For the first week I was in the class, the professor called me and another student aside. I think he was a sophomore and I was a freshman. He said, "You know this is a junior-level course, and you might find it really difficult. I want to warn you, you might want to consider not taking it."

Szunyogh: Uh-huh. How did it go?

Murphy: I got an A.

[Murphy and Szunyogh laugh]

Szunyogh: Well that worked out!

Murphy: That worked out okay. So that class was good, the other class, there was a Dr. Young that taught, I thought that that class was really good.

Szunyogh: Was it a history class—or Poly Sci?

Murphy: Poly Sci, yeah, I think it was about—well there was one called—maybe I took it as a January short term. The Enlightenment? And it was about mostly French, philosophy, literature, from just before the American revolutions, sort of that time frame? In the middle of the 1700s. Fifties, something like that. That was really—I thought that was an interesting course. He was really a good lecturer. And I took another class from him in this early American politics with conservative—sort of the beginnings of liberalism and conservatism in the U.S. Those were two good classes. I took one photography class, pass/fail.

Szunyogh: Mhm. How was that?

Murphy: I passed.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Murphy: I wasn't very clever, but.

Szunyogh: Did you just think that the class sounded fun, so you decided to take it?

Murphy: Yeah. And we were supposed to take pictures and develop and print them. So probably I would've liked to have taken a music class, but I didn't manage to fit that in. What other class? Well, most of the—it was like I took one extra course one fun course a term, and otherwise it was pretty much biology, chemistry and math; biology, chemistry and physics. So yeah, pretty hardcore science.

Szunyogh: Yeah, pretty much set in stone. Did they automatically sign you up for a lot of courses or did you have to pick?

Murphy: There were certain courses we would take—but there were classes you could choose to take your sophomore, your junior year. They switched them up. The—I mean, I don't remember having any problems getting into any classes that—the general biology class was probably the biggest class I was in. That was about 100 and something people. Everything else was pretty small. Well, maybe general chemistry was a little bigger too. So, yeah I don't remember having problems getting into any class, but to be honest, once you got past the intro level general chemistry and biology classes it wasn't like there were that many kids fighting to get into the upper level classes.

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Murphy: It was more of a matter of scheduling.

Szunyogh: You mentioned earlier that some streets have been removed since you were last at IWU. Are there any other structural additions or modifications to the campus that stick out in your mind, and did you consider any of them a nuisance?

Murphy: The new ones or the old ones?

Szunyogh: Both.

Murphy: Well, the libraries. The science center's new, the library's new. Our old science center looked—was dated even at the time that I was there. I mean it was functional but it wasn't anything special as far

as the facility. So probably every place I would've been is new. Well last time I was there—when you were there.

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Murphy: I don't know, you sort of get used to it.

Szunyogh: Was Shaw the science building?

Murphy: Yeah.

Szunyogh: Yeah they're going to tear that down soon.

Murphy: Woo-hoo, woo-hoo!

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Murphy: Oh and then the swimming pool is totally gone.

Szunyogh: Oh yeah.

Murphy: So that's different.

Szunyogh: Was that Hansen Student Center?

Murphy: With the coffee shop and book store?

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Murphy: Yeah. That used to be the gym and the pool was down below. So that whole rec center across the street from that is new.

Szunyogh: Mhm.

Murphy: Actually a lot of it's new. I'm trying to think the music building is still there and used as a music building, but that was still—that was the music building when my mom was a high school student. Because she remembered going there for a contest. They had a contest.

Szunyogh: Yeah. I think the building's pretty old.

Murphy: It is.

Szunyogh: Same with Buck. It's—

Murphy: Now which one is Buck? Is that the one just to the front of and to the side of the art school?

Szunyogh: Mhm, yeah.

Murphy: Yeah the art school was relatively —it was there, although I think they changed it a bit.

Szunyogh: They added on that rotunda in the front.

Murphy: Yeah. So that was there when I was there, but the theater...they were there.

Szunyogh: A lot of the dorms were—almost all the dorms were over there when you were there.

Murphy: Well there's that one new one that's kind of like apartments.

Szunyogh: Harriett. Well, the new one that they're building right now is the Gates.

Murphy: No, the—

Szunyogh: Harriett—

Murphy: —ones with the—

Szunyogh: —is the nicer, new dorm.

Murphy: And then the gender distribution and the differences—

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Murphy: Yeah, because Ferguson and Munsell were all women. And Gulick? And Pfeiffer. I lived in Ferguson and I lived in Pfeiffer.

Szunyogh: Were all of the dorms—were there any dorms specifically for first years and then upperclassmen dorms?

Murphy: No.

Szunyogh: So you were all mixed together.

Murphy: Yeah. Although my freshman year, I think almost all the women on my floor were freshmen.

Szunyogh: Okay.

Murphy: But other than that, I think most of the freshmen—I think you got a choice. I think most of the freshmen picked Ferguson and Munsell and then as you were there for a while you looked at some of the other dorms.

Szunyogh: Okay. Which dorms did you live in again?

Murphy: Ferguson and Pfeiffer.

Szunyogh: How were the dorms at the time?

Murphy: Functional but that's about it.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Murphy: Even the ones that were co-ed, they would only be co-ed—they would have all women on one floor, all men on one floor, and they'd be locked between the two floors.

Szunyogh: Oh.

Murphy: So there wasn't much gender mixing.

Szunyogh: Okay. Which dorms were co-ed? Do you remember?

Murphy: Well what's the one across Pfeiffer? Is that Gulick?

Szunyogh: Yes.

Murphy: Yeah.

Szunyogh: Okay.

Murphy: That had a floor; it was like all women with a floor of men. And then what's the one with the suites? Is it Dodds?

Szunyogh: Yes.

Murphy: Can't remember if that was mixed or not. But, where were you last year?

Szunyogh: This past year I was in Dolan. I think that was a mixed dorm.

Murphy: That was all mixed.

Szunyogh: Yeah. It was a men's dorm.

Murphy: Yeah. And so was the one next to it. Magill? And then there were a couple of smaller houses.

Szunyogh: Well now Adams Hall, Blackstock, and Kemp are all small halls. So they're campus housing but they're homes. They're houses that've been converted to student housing. Were those available when you were there?

Murphy: Yeah. But only to upperclassmen—

Szunyogh: Okay.

Murphy: —because they were smaller.

Szunyogh: Were they themed housing then or not really?

Murphy: One was. I want to say one was a foreign language? Or that's kind of what they tried to get. I can't remember. I remember thinking I would've lived in those if I hadn't gone to an apartment.

Szunyogh: How were the other facilities? The library, the athletic center?

Murphy: I mean. Well, the rec center, I'm not sure what you mean by athletic center.

Szunyogh: That's what I mean. I mean—

Murphy: It was a gym.

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Murphy: I mean it was basically a gym with basketball hoops.

Szunyogh: Okay.

Murphy: Well they had the basketball games there.

Szunyogh: Okay.

Murphy: And then there was a swimming pool. Your basic swimming pool, with your basic swimming pool locker room! I mean real basic. The rec center in Strongsville is a lot nicer than this one. And then there was the football stadium. Everything was pretty basic.

Szunyogh: Is the football stadium still the same? No?

Murphy: I don't remember. Did they get a new one? I don't know. They changed a bunch of other stuff.

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Murphy: And the library—we actually have books in the library! But there wasn't the—there was very little computer stuff going on.

Szunyogh: Uh-huh. We still have books in the library.

Murphy: I know. Unlike Loyola. Because I can remember doing something with computers and physics and it was the punch tape. So there was no DOS, let alone Windows, back then. So you know, you didn't have—well, I want to say they had a media center where you could listen to tapes and they had headphones. And that was someplace but I don't remember where that was. I don't know, it was the seventies, it was just classrooms and...

Szunyogh: How did your lifestyle and work ethic change from your freshman year to your senior year?

Murphy: I don't know if it did all that much. I mean, I remember freshman year thinking I was going to flunk—no, I wasn't going to do well enough, I was going to flunk out.

Szunyogh: Why?

Murphy: I should change my major. I don't know, we had weekly biology quizzes, I mean, I must've gotten an 80 percent on one, so.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Murphy: So that was the end of the world for me, and I had to give up my pre-med thoughts. And I think by senior year, you just know your way around a little bit more? I worked—I mean I always worked hard. I'm trying to think. I didn't study on Friday nights and Saturdays or Sunday morning. But I usually studied Sunday nights some but I think the library closed early on Sunday night? I wasn't one to study a lot the weekends because I studied every night during the week.

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Murphy: And then Friday, I always seemed to have a lab on Friday afternoon. And so I was in Shaw until five or six o'clock every Friday. So that sort of shortened my weekend.

Szunyogh: What would you do on your weekends?

Murphy: Hung out with friends.

Szunyogh: What sorts of things did you do?

Murphy: I don't even remember. Sometimes we'd go to the bars. I think the drinking age was eighteen then. So we'd go to the bars and we'd go dancing sometimes. Sometimes I remember they'd have free or almost free movies in—what's the hall above the Dugout? Do they still call it the Dugout? Where the—?

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Murphy: Okay. Up there, there's a hall up there.

Szunyogh: It's new now. I mean it's the Young Memorial—

Murphy: Yeah.

Szunyogh: —Center now.

Murphy: They used to put—they used to do movies up there, like almost every week. Then there was this—they called it the Pit? So you go through the Dugout—

Szunyogh: Yeah. That's still there. We call it the Underground. There's no billiards there anymore.

Murphy: They used to have...pool tables and I know my—was it my sophomore year? I remember Jeanine Herbst, that was her job was to run—

Szunyogh: The billiards?

Murphy: Yes. Because you had to go in and you had to, I don't know, leave your—I don't remember carrying around a ID—you had to sign for it, or maybe you had to pay 25 cents or something. So that was her job, was to watch that. So we'd go down there and we'd play pool.

Szunyogh: Did you have a campus job?

Murphy: Yeah I was a teaching assistant.

Szunyogh: Oh okay. How often did you do that?

Murphy: I think it was supposed to be ten hours a week?

Szunyogh: Okay.

Murphy: I did it sophomore, junior, and senior year.

Szunyogh: Okay. And then you didn't have a campus job here freshman year?

Murphy: No, we weren't allowed to.

Szunyogh: Oh okay.

Murphy: Yeah, yeah. So I think I had—I had more in scholarship money my freshman year than sophomore year. Part of it changed to work-study.

Szunyogh: Okay. What sort of classes did you TA?

Murphy: Oh, the general biology lab. So I walked around and helped the students with their questions. Was it just general? Yeah I think it was general biology. I think that was the only one, general biology, and then, supervised, when they took the test, because they took a quiz once a week so you'd stand around and make sure that the frat boys weren't cheating.

Szunyogh: Ah!

Murphy: And then graded all the tests.

Szunyogh: Okay.

Murphy: That took about ten hours, couple hours in the lab, an hour for the quiz, couple hours for grading the exam. Hanging out with the secretary in the biology department, Marilyn or something?

Szunyogh: Mhm. What was your interaction or opinion pertaining to fraternity and sorority life?

Murphy: I really didn't have much to do with them. I did the rush or something—went in a week early. And it was a good experience to be there early but I never should have rushed sororities that just wasn't my cup of tea.

Szunyogh: Yeah. What do you mean you went in a week early?

Murphy: They had a week before classes started where all you did is every night you went around to the different sororities.

Szunyogh: Oh okay.

Murphy: I mean maybe it wasn't a full week. It was just a long weekend.

Szunyogh: Okay. When was that?

Murphy: Beginning of freshman year.

Szunyogh: So it was before your freshman year?

Murphy: Mhm.

Szunyogh: Oh okay.

Murphy: Yeah, so it was before you did anything, you got done. I think I did it mainly just to get there and be early. And then I had some friends that—on our floor we had—it was mostly freshmen. And by the end of the week, we had every sorority represented on our floor.

Szunyogh: Oh okay.

Murphy: We had like one person pledge this—

Szunyogh: Yeah, yeah, my floor was like that too my freshman year.

Murphy: So I think I was in—which houses was I in? I was in two different sorority houses and a couple different fraternity houses while I was in there but that wasn't—Greek life wasn't a big thing for me.

Szunyogh: Mhm. Was it a big thing for other people on campus? Or was it—

Murphy: Oh yeah.

Szunyogh: Yeah. That's very present.

Murphy: Yeah, yeah. I mean there were people that that was part of who they were. And a lot of people who—what do they call it? You're a parent—

Szunyogh: Their legacies?

Murphy: Yeah. There were a lot of legacies. It was big. It was a big deal. Us non-Greeks, we used to giggle about it.

Szunyogh: Yeah. I had a next question and it's just slipped away. [Pause] Is there a favorite story or memory that you have about any aspect of your life while at Illinois Wesleyan?

Murphy: I'm never very good at those. I mean there are a lot of little things. That's what I remember. I just sort of have this vague remembering of having—I really liked it there. I had a—just felt part of a community. Had a lot of friends, and you just always had somebody to do things with. But picking out one story, that's hard to do. Especially one story that's kind of representative.

Szunyogh: Mhm. Well can you think of anything that's had the biggest impact on your life that came from your time at IWU?

Murphy: I don't know, I think the biggest thing is just how you deal with people. Going to university, living with that many people, a lot of different types of people, you certainly learn how to get along with people. And you learn about differences. To be honest, classes were interesting, and I enjoyed them at the time, but how much I really consciously carry on from that, it's hard to say.

Szunyogh: Mhm. Was there much diversity on campus?

Murphy: Probably not that much.

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Murphy: Yeah. I mean I had a couple Black friends, and an Indian friend, and a Malaysian friend. So I guess there were little pockets. To be honest, it was more—you have people from different cultures but maybe because there were only a few, you didn't think of them as being, oh this is my African-American friend, or this is my Asian friend, or this is my Indian friend, if they were just a person.

Szunyogh: That's good.

Murphy: So—gosh I wish I was better at names. I mean, they did some cultural things that—when they're on campus, they acted like everybody else most of the time. And then something would come up, culturally, that made them stand out, like my one friend was—left school to get married. It was an arranged marriage, and she went back to India. And then she shows up a year later after the wedding

with a different last name, and finished her senior year at school. But the whole idea of an arranged marriage, that was really different. I remember one friend who was Black. We were talking about what kind of underwear to wear underneath white pants and she said of course you had to wear black underwear.

[Murphy and Szunyogh laugh]

Murphy: Well of course she forgot who she was with.

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Murphy: As far as the gay and lesbian community, it wasn't something that was really talked about then. So there was diversity, but I wasn't really aware of it as being—I don't know. They were just friends.

Szunyogh: Yeah, yeah. [Pause] I guess, what kind of reputation have you encountered Illinois Wesleyan to have? Has it changed since you've graduated?

Murphy: Well I think, since I'm not in Illinois, every now and then I'll mention Illinois Wesleyan. 'Oh yeah, I've heard of it!' But it doesn't quite have a national reputation. It has more of a local and state reputation than it does out of state. Interestingly enough, there are three of us, went to the same medical school. Which, considering it's only a class of 120, that was actually a pretty high percentage of people from the same school who ended up going to med school. Maybe we developed a reputation there because after we went there, then they had a couple people the next couple years. They ended up there.

Szunyogh: Where'd you go to medical school?

Murphy: Washington University in St. Louis.

Szunyogh: Yeah I think that a lot of students still go there after—

Murphy: But at the time, we were—there was one person that our pre-med advisor knew that had gone there.

Szunyogh: Oh really.

Murphy: Yeah. Tom McKinney. A real nice boy. But every now and then, you run—it's interesting. Every now and then you run into people from Illinois Wesleyan, which is kind of strange outside of—

Szunyogh: Yeah. Do you mean people that you knew while at Illinois Wesleyan, or people who went there—

Murphy: No, no, people that went there. Which is surprising when I was working at Kaiser and I went to Akron and I was having lunch and found out that one of the other doctors there at Kaiser went to Illinois Wesleyan.

Szunyogh: Really?

Murphy: Yeah! Yeah. And then you know we go to the art museum and here's the—

Szunyogh: Ames.

Murphy: Yeah! Ames.

Szunyogh: Atrium.

Murphy: Yeah. They have a tie at Illinois Wesleyan. And I always thought it was cool to see somebody on TV that went to Illinois Wesleyan.

Szunyogh: Yeah, yeah. You were at IWU when Jack Sikma was there.

Murphy: Yeah, saw Jack Sikma. Yeah, so when I was in medical school, my roommate and I went, and I think I just went to the medical meeting but I was traveling with her and she was interviewing in San Diego and Seattle. And we get to Seattle and some people we had met at this meeting in Los Angeles invited us to join them for dinner when we were in Seattle.

Szunyogh: Uh-huh.

Murphy: So I turned the corner going up the stairs and there is a full, full five-foot portrait of Jack Sigma.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Murphy: And I was like, oh, there's Jack Sikma!

[Szunyogh laughs]

Murphy: And everyone goes, how do you know Jack Sikma? And I said, well he went to Illinois Wesleyan—he went where I went to college! 'Oh, he's such a fine basketball player here. We just love him here in Seattle.' That's when he was still playing.

Szunyogh: Yeah. Was that weird?

Murphy: That was weird. That was weird. And then I can remember my friend Donna, I went to visit her, was it—she was a year behind me. It must have been a year after I had graduated. And she introduced me to this woman, who was her roommate. She said, 'Remember her name, she's going to be famous someday.' And one day I turned on the TV and there she was.

[Szunyogh laughs] That's funny.

Murphy: So yeah, people from Wesleyan get around. But I don't think people know they're from Wesleyan. You know? Like...I'm really bad. There are a couple of actors. So I think he won an Academy Award. At least he was nominated. He was from Wesleyan before I was there. And then there's Dawn Upshaw. She's a real famous opera singer.

Szunyogh: Oh.

Murphy: She's from Wesleyan, so.

Szunyogh: Just one second, I'm going to close the door.

Murphy: Now when I was at the dinner for the Criley's, I sat with somebody from Pontiac who brought a guest from the medical school at Southern, University of Illinois. He said that pre-med students from Illinois Wesleyan, if they had the backing from the faculty there they knew they were good. So I think

there's a lot of in-state... I think Wesleyan has a presence that, people know people from Wesleyan but they don't know they're from Wesleyan.

Szunyogh: Mhm. [Pause] Would you say there was a campus bubble effect while you were—?

Murphy: What's that?

Szunyogh: You don't know what's going outside of Illinois Wesleyan while you're there.

Murphy: Yeah, I think that's true about colleges anywhere. Maybe less now. I mean, I was pretty apolitical with the smattering of politics. I remember when I was in college that was the time of—well it was towards the end of Vietnam, and I remember the whole Nixon thing, and I remember turning to my friend, probably the only other Democrat in Pontiac, and saying, that Nixon's going to be in trouble after this Watergate thing.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Murphy: And then, but I don't remember getting involved, like once I left, in medical school, I did more with the—a little bit more with the campaign, with the Equal Rights Amendment, and women's issues. But I think—maybe this isn't just Illinois Wesleyan but maybe it's just college students in general. Not being as involved? I think maybe they are more now. Maybe they are at bigger schools when they're—Illinois Wesleyan isn't very generational. I mean, you go to other universities. You've got graduate students and postdocs as well as undergrad and, I don't know, like 99 percent of the campus is undergraduates.

Szunyogh: Mhm, yeah.

Murphy: Yeah so I think there's a bit of a bubble.

Szunyogh: Is there anything you would like to see improved in the near future specifically for IWU?

Murphy: I don't know, you know. I know a little bit from you, but I'm not really in touch with everything that's gone on.

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Murphy: They seem to have a lot more opportunities there. I mean the whole bit about travel, gosh, I would have loved to do that—more than when I was a student. And I know in the science department, there's a lot more encouraging students to do research.

Szunyogh: Mhm. Did you get to do any research while you were there?

Murphy: I had a little research project. But I didn't do very much on it to be perfectly honest.

Szunyogh: Oh.

Murphy: But yeah, yeah, I think that's good.

Szunyogh: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Murphy: No, I thought, I mean, I didn't look at a lot of other schools, but I probably would-well I picked a few-I would've picked it again!

Szunyogh: Yeah. Well that's good. Well, I think we've covered pretty much every question I had written down. So, let's see, we talked about you being a biology major, and your interactions with Dr. Hippensteele, Dr. Criley, and Dr. Franzen, and how you-this is your-you were one of the first people in your family to go to college. And IWU was the only school you applied to, and you enjoyed your experience, so that's good. And it sounds like overall you think the changes that have occurred over the years have been for the better, would you say?

Murphy: Mhm.

Szunyogh: That's good. Well yeah, so thank you very much, Dr. Murphy, slash Mom.

Murphy: Thank you very much, Abby Szunyogh, slash—

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Murphy: —daughter.

Szunyogh: Yeah, and I guess you recommended the university to me—

Murphy: I did.

Szunyogh: —and, I'm going there, so.

Murphy: Although tuition did go up a little bit.

Szunyogh: That's true, that's true. I have one last question. Did you know very many people whose family also went to...like how, I'm your daughter, and I'm going to IWU now.

Murphy: Uh-huh.

Szunyogh: Were there many people who you went to school with who their parents who'd gone to...?

Murphy: Oh, yeah, well, one of my roommates, Linda, her daughter went to Wesleyan. So she was two years older than you. My best friend from high school, her daughter went to Wesleyan. Another good friend of mine, Sheila—did her daughter —did her kids?—no, I think they went to Notre Dame.

Szunyogh: Mm.

Murphy: But she taught at Wesleyan.

Szunyogh: Oh really!

Murphy: Yeah. I think, law, something to do with law, Sheila Vicars-Duncan.

Szunyogh: Oh.

Murphy: But I'm trying to think. There were a lot of kids in your class their parents went to Wesleyan—

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Murphy: There was a big—was it one of the bigger ones?

Szunyogh: I'm not sure. I know my friend Sam, she's the eighth generation to go to Wesleyan or something crazy.

Murphy: Yeah. Even when I went there, I remember people from my hometown—I can't name any names right now—there were a couple people from my hometown whose parents went to Wesleyan whose kids went to Wesleyan.

Szunyogh: Okay.

Murphy: Yeah, so a lot of—yeah, there's a lot of that there.

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Murphy: Nepotism? No, not nepotism.

Szunyogh: Why do you think that is? Do you think it's just—

Murphy: Oh, yeah, I mean it's a good school. It has a good reputation. It depends on what you're looking for. Like my roommate from medical school, she was looking for a big school so she went to University of Illinois.

Szunyogh: Oh, okay.

Murphy: So it depends on what you're looking for, but if you want a small school with a good reputation and you're looking at Illinois, I think Illinois Wesleyan is one of the better ones. Even though I think Obama just spoke at Knox up in—

Szunyogh: Really.

Murphy: Yeah.

Szunyogh: Huh!

Murphy: Yeah, or the town. I think he spoke at the university or he used the campus, but he was just there.

Szunyogh: Huh.

Murphy: Galesburg?

Szunyogh: Yeah—

Murphy: Is that the name?

Szunyogh: —yeah. Knox is in Galesburg. Interesting. I feel like it's a random place to go.

Murphy: Yeah.

Szunyogh: But that's what—

Murphy: Well yeah if you're going to a school in Illinois and you don't want to go to Chicago, you don't want a big school, I mean, what, there's Wesleyan, Millikin, Knox. What were some of the other ones I looked at? I didn't look at them in the book.

Szunyogh: Saw their names in the book.

Murphy: Mhm.

Szunyogh: Yeah. I don't know, I'm blanking, but.

Murphy: Well who do you guys play in basketball?

Szunyogh: Millikin, Wheaton.

Murphy: Okay.

Szunyogh: Let's see, I'm just constantly blanking on the name right now. But, that's okay. Illinois Wesleyan's just, a good place, I guess. Anyways, well thank you very much for your time, and I guess that's all I have.

Murphy: Okay.